

**EM SSAB CHAIRS**  
**Bi-Monthly Conference Call**  
**Thursday, March 27, 2008**  
**3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.**

**Participants**

**Chairs/Representatives:**

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Idaho            | Lisa Aldrich, Dick Buxton, R.D. Maynard              |
| Nevada           | Rosemary Rehfeldt, Kelly Snyder, Dave Hermann        |
| NNM              | Fran Berting, Menice Santistevan                     |
| Oak Ridge        | Steve Dixon, Spencer Gross, Pat Halsey, Pete Osborne |
| Paducah          | William (Allen) Burnett, Eric Roberts                |
| Richland/Hanford | Susan Leckband, Karen Lutz, Shelly Cimon             |
| Savannah River   | Donna Antonucci, Gerri Flemming                      |

**DOE representatives:**

|       |                             |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| EM-13 | Melissa Nielson, Doug Frost |
| EM-12 | Christine Gelles            |
| EM-20 | Mark Gilbertson             |

***OPENING REMARKS***

Doug Frost welcomed participants to the conference call. In his review of the agenda, Mr. Frost noted that Merle Sykes, Director for the Office of Strategic Planning and Analysis, would not be able to participate due to a scheduling conflict.

**Waste Disposition Strategies Update**

Christine Gelles, Director for the Office of Disposal Operations (EM-12), provided an update on EM's waste disposition planning efforts.

EM-12 has completed its annual collection of revised lifecycle waste forecast data for the low-level and mixed low-level waste (LLW and MLLW) streams. Ms. Gelles explained that some of the sites needed more time to respond to the data call due to the recent baseline change effort that EM has gone through. Baselines had to be adjusted to reflect the five-year funding targets received from Office of Management and Budget, many of which impacted waste disposition activities. All of the site-submitted data has been through a DOE-Headquarters (HQ) validation review and should be available in the Waste Information Management System (WIMS) in the near future.

EM has continued to work with the Carlsbad Field Office and the National Transuranic (TRU) Waste Program to obtain updated inventories from TRU generating sites. These inventories are being developed and collected in order to support EM's compliance

recertification application, which will be provided to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in March 2009. Once the TRU data has been approved for regulatory purposes, it will be incorporated into WIMS, which will enable users to draw disposition maps for TRU waste streams.

Earlier in the month, EM published a Record of Decision (ROD) regarding the consolidation of specific TRU waste inventories at Idaho National Laboratory (INL). The majority of these inventories will come from small-quantity sites and will be shipped to Idaho to be processed in the Advanced Mixed Waste Treatment Project (AMWTP) prior to being packaged and transported to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP). Hanford will be the only non small-quantity site included in this operation. Inventories include both remote-handled and contact-handled TRU volumes. The value of shipping TRU to INL for processing is that it enables DOE to utilize the AMWTP's compaction capabilities, thereby maximizing the storage capacity at WIPP.

With regard to how this new practice will impact EM's current shipping configuration and schedule, Ms. Gelles explained that the program is still working out the details in terms of transportation resources such as TRUPACTs and shipping fleet capabilities. Before it can determine the impact of this practice, EM needs to first assess its small sites' TRU activities, then sequence and prioritize their shipments. Once those components are identified, EM will be able to determine what, if any, impact there will be to the current approved shipping plans. Ms. Gelles noted that it is quite possible that no TRU shipments for consolidation purposes will occur in FY 2008; rather, shipments will probably begin in FY 2009, but even this is difficult to plan until there is an approved budget and funding.

The TRU consolidation ROD was based on a Supplemental Analysis and was announced in Volume 73, Number 46 of the *Federal Register*, on March 7.

Ms. Gelles also reported that EM-12 has been performing market research in support of a possible complex-wide disposal contract. A number of responses from the commercial waste management industry have been received since December, and currently the program is in the process of developing and finalizing a potential strategy for procuring a prime disposal contract. This new complex-wide contract would replace the current disposal contracts that are set to expire over the course of the next 18 months.

On March 21, EM also published a request for expressions of interest for commercial mixed waste treatment services, and specifically those with thermal treatment capabilities that would allow EM to end its dependency on Oak Ridge's Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) incinerator. Ms. Gelles explained that the TSCA incinerator is baselined to close in FY 2009; it is an aging facility that is expensive to maintain, and not necessarily the most cost-effective treatment for waste streams with viable commercial treatment alternatives. Market research is very important, especially with regard to treatment services such as thermal treatments, economies of scale, and standard processes like stabilization and encapsulation, many of which can be readily deployed and performed by commercial firms today.

In response to a question regarding Energy Solutions' plans to import LLW from Italy, Ms. Gelles explained that although DOE will play no role in this practice, it is monitoring the matter. EnergySolutions plans to import large volumes of radioactive waste into one of two eastern ports and ship it to its Bear Creek Processing Facility in Tennessee for characterization, segregation, and possibly stabilization, before sending some of the waste to Utah for disposal. The remaining waste may be released from rad-control and disposed of in sanitary or RCRA landfills. DOE has no role in this operation, but continues to monitor it due to the political implications. If this issue were to lead to a legislative proposal or ban on the importation of radioactive waste, DOE would need to be aware.

Furthermore, the Bear Creek treatment facility performs an important service for some of EM's sites. Currently it is only licensed to handle LLW; however, Bear Creek is pursuing a permit for MLLW as well. So, to the extent that the Italian import or other commercial activities affect Bear Creek's revenue stream and assist its effort to obtain that RCRA permit, DOE will benefit from that capability.

Ms. Gelles added that there has also been recent coverage regarding Energy Solutions' plans to pursue thermal treatment technologies with international firms in the Middle East that claim to have innovative treatment processes. As previously discussed, EM monitors commercial treatment developments; those companies that can provide useful services for deployment in the DOE complex often contact the program directly.

Steve Dixon, Oak Ridge SSAB, asked for clarification on the National Waste Disposition Priority List; specifically, is it a DOE term?

Ms. Gelles clarified that EM maintains a National LLW and MLLW Disposition Plan, but not a prioritization list. She suggested that perhaps Mr. Dixon was referring to EPA's National Priority List which provides information on all of the sites maintained by EPA for cleanup under CERCLA. Some of EM's facilities are also included on that list.

## **Engineering and Technology Update**

Mark Gilbertson, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Engineering and Technology (EM-20), began by thanking the participants for their comments on EM's Engineering and Technology Roadmap. In its development of the Roadmap, EM-20 strived to produce a succinct document that would provide audiences with a view of the current challenges facing EM with regard to technical risk and uncertainty, and the strategies that will be used to address them. Due to the brevity of the Roadmap, many of the more detailed comments received from groups such as the EM SSAB have been incorporated and taken into consideration in the development of other documents such as the Integrated Multi-Year Program Plan. The Engineering and Technology Roadmap is available online at, [http://www.em.doe.gov/pdfs/FINAL%20ET%20Roadmap%20\\_3-5-08\\_.pdf](http://www.em.doe.gov/pdfs/FINAL%20ET%20Roadmap%20_3-5-08_.pdf). The Integrated Multi-Year Program Plan (FY 2008 – FY 2010) is available online at [http://www.em.doe.gov/pdfs/Integrated%20MYPP%20Final%20\\_3-20-08\\_.pdf](http://www.em.doe.gov/pdfs/Integrated%20MYPP%20Final%20_3-20-08_.pdf).

Mr. Gilbertson reported that the National Academies of Science (NAS) published a report for EM on February 14 regarding engineering and technology. The report was very positive. NAS generally endorses the issues and strategies that EM-20 identified in its Engineering and Technology Roadmap and believes that EM needs to invest in ongoing research and development.

Additionally, EM-20 has posted a third edition of its Engineering and Technology – Innovative Technologies Highlights on the EM website, [http://www.em.doe.gov/pdfs/DOE\\_EM20\\_Highlights\\_screen.pdf](http://www.em.doe.gov/pdfs/DOE_EM20_Highlights_screen.pdf). This particular edition features the work being done at Hanford along the Columbia River and at the Savannah River Site (SRS).

EM-20 also hopes to post its guidance on performing technology readiness assessments in the near future. The purpose of these assessments is to provide a common ground for analyzing and better understanding the maturity of EM's first-of-their-kind projects and activities. This guidance process has been used by both the Department of Defense and NASA for technology development. EM will pilot the assessments on eight projects and make those reports available online upon their completion.

Mr. Gilbertson will join the Chairs at their April meeting in Richland, WA, and provide a presentation on EM-20's other highlights and activities, such as its Best-in-Class initiative.

### **Planning Committee for Spring Chairs Meeting (Hanford)**

Mr. Frost thanked the planning committee for all of its hard work. He noted that the Boards had been encouraged to submit specific questions and topics for each of the spring meeting presenters as well as their top-three site-specific issues slides to EM-13.

Ms. Leckband summarized the various events that will take place during the week of the EM SSAB Chairs meeting. Participants will be able to tour the Hanford site on Tuesday, April 22, followed by the public meeting on April 23-24. The Hanford Advisory Board (HAB) will also host a reception on the evening of Wednesday, April 23 at the Columbia River Exhibition of History, Science, and Technology Museum.

Those members and support staff planning to attend the spring Chairs meeting in Richland, WA, must register online at, <http://www.hanford.gov/doeevents/?loc=HAB08> by April 10.

The final planning committee conference call is scheduled for April 10 at 3:00 p.m. EST.

### **Around the Complex:**

#### **Savannah River – Donna Antonucci**

- The Savannah River Site (SRS) Citizens' Advisory Board (CAB) has welcomed a number of new members, all of which were able to attend and participate in the Board's March 24 meeting.
  - During the meeting, members received presentations on and discussed the EM budget, the integrated priority list, performance measures, saltstone operations milestones and interim salt processing, and the Environmental Assessment for the use of SRS for military training purposes.
  - As a result of the March 24 meeting, the CAB prepared and submitted recommendations to DOE regarding the EM Budget and the Integrated Priority List.
- SRS awarded its Management and Operating contract to Savannah River Nuclear Solutions; however, a protest was filed and the contract has been put on a 90-day stay.

#### **Richland – Susan Leckband**

- The next HAB meeting will be held in Portland, OR. Historically, the Board has traveled outside of the Tri-Cities area two times a year to communities with intense interest in cleanup and cleanup issues.
  - High on the meeting agenda is the DOE budget. The HAB's two technical committees have been working to compile detailed advice on the FY 2009 funding allocations.
  - Discussions will also involve cursory information on baselines; a more detailed workshop is planned for the future.
- HAB members are looking forward to an upcoming workshop on waste sites, which will feature the first big discussion on the practice of capping waste versus re-treating and disposing of it. The workshop should take place in either April or May.
- One of the HAB's greatest concerns is that there is only one more meeting scheduled on the Tri-Party Agreement (TPA) negotiations between the State regulators and DOE.
- The Board's Tank Waste Committee has prepared advice to DOE regarding the reconvening of site coordination technology groups. The reestablishment of these groups would help create synergy between sites, likely in conjunction with EM-20's efforts.
- The HAB has continued preparations for the spring EM SSAB Chairs meeting and looks forward to hosting all of the participants in April.

#### **Paducah – Allen Burnett**

- The Paducah CAB is pleased that DOE has resolved its internal dispute with EPA regarding the Paducah site's southwest plume, which will allow EM's project to move forward.
- During the Board's last meeting, members passed a recommendation to DOE regarding the development of a long-term strategy for the disposal of potentially recyclable materials.

- As a follow-up to its review of *The Politics of Cleanup*, the Paducah CAB will attend a Community Reuse Organization meeting and work to establish better lines of communication and cooperation with similar groups.
- The Paducah CAB will soon welcome one new board member and hopes to collect at least one or two more applications in the near future.
- The Board is trying to coordinate a public outreach effort with DOE and its contractors for Earth Day and National Educators Day. This initiative will help the Board educate the public and also serve as a mechanism for membership recruitment.

### **Oak Ridge – Spencer Gross**

- In February, the Oak Ridge SSAB (ORSSAB) co-sponsored a public meeting on how to best preserve the historic significance of the East Tennessee Technology Park's K-25 building. Public participation and local media interest were high.
  - In March, the ORSSAB recommended that DOE preserve the north tower of K-25 and implement suggestions from the local organization, Partnership for K-25 Preservation. However, four members of the ORSSAB wrote a minority opinion that the tower be demolished and an interpretive center be built in its place to explain the historical significance.
- The ORSSAB passed two additional recommendations during its March meeting. The first pertains to conducting future independent verification of cleanup sites, and the second recommends that future explanations of significant difference are grounded in fact, and not assumptions.
- During the Chairs' last call, the ORSSAB reported that its Oral History Subcommittee achieved its goal of initiating the establishment of a comprehensive oral history program for Oak Ridge. Since then, a steering committee has been established that is responsible for the administration of the program and will be led by the Oak Ridge Public Library.
  - The ORSSAB subcommittee's last act was to draft a recommendation for DOE Oak Ridge to support the initiative and participate on the oral history steering committee.
- The Board recently published its spring Advocate newsletter. The newsletter can be found at <http://www.oakridge.doe.gov/em/ssab/Publications/Advocates.htm>.
- The Board has wrapped up another successful membership recruitment campaign and expects to begin filling vacancies this summer.

### **Northern New Mexico – Fran Berting**

- The Northern New Mexico (NNM) CAB held a meeting on March 26. Discussion focused primarily on a letter sent from the CAB to DOE Managers Donald Winchell and George Rael regarding suggestions for the site's budget.
  - The NNM CAB would like DOE to prioritize short-term milestones to fit the current budget shortfall, in view of short-term increased scope, to avoid spending funds on fines. Its intent is not to "renegotiate the Consent Order." However, the New Mexico Environment Department

misunderstood this intent, fearing renegotiation of the entire Consent Order, and did not want to consider any changes.

- Following the March 26 meeting, NMED withdrew its support for the NNM CAB's April forum on Material Disposal Area-G.
- The Board's recent meeting also marked the last meeting for Vice Chair Fran Berting, who has served with the EM SSAB for ten years. Dr. Berting was honored along with member Barbara Gonzales for her service to the EM SSAB.
- Los Alamos National Laboratory recently hosted two public meetings on the transformation of the National Nuclear Security Administration complex; public participation and support for the nuclear industry appeared to be high.

#### **Nevada – Dave Hermann**

- The Nevada Test Site (NTS) CAB recently concluded a successful recruitment effort resulting in a number of new membership nominees.
- In accordance with its plan to hold meetings outside of Las Vegas, the NTS CAB recently met in several rural communities.
- The Board is trying to increase the amount of public participation during their meetings. As a result, an outreach committee has been established which will address a variety of outreach efforts.

#### **Idaho – Dick Buxton**

- The INL CAB members, facilitators, and DOE representatives participated in a very interesting tour of WIPP in March.
- The INL CAB has reviewed the EM budget and has some concern as to how INL will be able to move forward with decontamination and decommissioning activities and keep its workforce intact.
  - There has been some discussion regarding the possible delay in construction for the new waste disposal plant. A foundation has already been laid and interior work has begun, but INL may have to delay operations in order to maintain its work force.
- As previously reported, the INL CAB recently welcomed three new members; the board expects to add one more in May.

#### **Closing Remarks**

Mr. Frost announced that DOE plans to add an eighth board to the EM SSAB by establishing an EM SSAB for the Portsmouth Gaseous Diffusion Plant. Plans for the Portsmouth board were discussed during a March 18 public meeting in Piketon, Ohio; Ms. Nielson was in attendance. It is unlikely that the new board will be established in time for the EM SSAB Chairs' spring meeting; however, EM hopes that a Chair, Vice Chair, and Federal Coordinator will be able to attend the Chairs' September meeting in Washington D.C. In terms of participation, the new board will likely have 10-30 members in accordance with the EM SSAB Charter.

Mr. Frost thanked the participants for their time.